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Chairman: Mr. ELARABY (Egypt)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.30 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: As representatives have been informed, this formal meeting of the Committee has been convened in order to have an opportunity to listen to the statement of the Secretary-General.

Thereafter, we shall proceed to the next phase of our work in an informal meeting to consider conclusions and recommendations which might eventually be reflected in a draft resolution or draft decision of the Committee.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The CHAIRMAN: I now have the pleasure and honour to warmly welcome to the First Committee Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to invite him to address the Committee.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It gives me great pleasure, and it is an honour, to address the First Committee today in its resumed session.

A major purpose of the session is the integration of disarmament and arms-regulation issues into the broader international peace and security agenda. This includes a reassessment of the multilateral arms-control and disarmament machinery.

A second aim is to develop a more comprehensive approach to disarmament. This involves seeking security at lower levels of armaments and armed forces in the post-cold-war era.

The end of bipolarity has not diminished the need for disarmament. If anything, it has brought greater urgency to the tasks of setting priorities and of establishing machinery for their realization.

The number of armed conflicts around the world is increasing. This has brought a renewed realization that the process of arms limitation and disarmament must embrace both the acquisition and the use of weapons.

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One striking effect of the end of the cold war has been a greater willingness on the part of States to supplement negotiated agreements with collateral measures for confidence building. Greater transparency in military-related matters is now more acceptable than before. The prospects of diverting much needed resources away from military purposes are now better than ever.

But none of this will be possible unless States, both large and small, feel secure. Measures should be taken to reassure States which feel that their security is threatened. Indeed, such measures are necessary if a new spiral of the arms race is to be avoided.

There is, for example, a growing concern over the dangers of nuclear proliferation. I also see tensions escalating in regions where large numbers of weapons have been left over from the cold war. The elimination of such weapons is a major part of the work of the United Nations in post-conflict peace-building in such countries as Cambodia and Somalia, for example.

Amid these emerging trends, there is a broadening area of political consensus about the role of the United Nations. As seems evident from the response of Member States to my report (A/C.1/47/7) on "New Dimensions" of disarmament, there are at least five major areas demanding priority attention. Let me refer to them briefly.

First, a helpful legacy of the cold war is the system of multilateral and bilateral agreements and treaties. They provide a solid foundation for further arms-regulation and disarmament measures. The process of negotiation must, therefore, continue.

Secondly, confidence-building measures are now becoming an integral part of the work of the United Nations in the fields of conflict-prevention and

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conflict-resolution. The involvement of regional organizations in confidence-building through consciousness-raising should be encouraged.

Thirdly, since the incidence of the actual use of weapons has continued, and increased in some parts of the world, measures must be put in place to monitor trends in military procurement and spending. The establishment of a mechanism for that purpose should be hastened through measures such as the arms trade Register at United Nations Headquarters.

Fourthly, the process of economic adjustment to the end of the cold war has in some cases created more problems than the major military spenders anticipated. Lessons and experiences should be shared. In that way the fear of economic dislocation will not become an obstacle to progress in disarmament.

Fifthly, as a more integrated approach towards the issues of disarmament, security and conflict-resolution is put in place, we need to give serious consideration to the machinery for its implementation.

In this last respect, I should mention that the Secretariat's capabilities are being strengthened to enable it effectively to discharge its responsibilities. I am keenly aware of the concerns felt by Member States that any changes made in this regard should take into account their probable impact on the mandated programmes and activities in the field of disarmament.

I am currently in the process of considering a proposal to relocate units of the Office of Disarmament Affairs to Geneva. As I understand it, there is a desire among delegations to consider this idea in the broader context of the disarmament machinery and the Secretariat's capacity to service it. I will therefore continue consultations on this matter.

I wish you success in your deliberations at this resumed session.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.